

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 7694

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (GARBLED THROUGHOUT)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: CMLA ZIA AND THE PNA: IS "CLOSE" ENOUGH?

REF: (A) ISLAMABAD 5954 (B) ISLAMABAD 6552 (C) ISLAMABAD 7585
(D) ISLAMABAD 6980

1. SUMMARY: THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA) HAS COME
WITHIN A HAIRBREADTH OF JOINING THE GOVERNMENT. A "FINAL MEET-
ING" WITH CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) GENERAL ZIA
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IS SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 16. BETWEEN NOW AND THEN THE PNA WILL
ATTEMPT TO WORK OUT ITS OWN DIFFICULTIES AS THE CMLA CONTINUES
TO MULL OVER THE DEMANDS OF HIS PROSPECTIVE COLLEAGUES.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN A DISPLAY OF THE PNA'S SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ABILITY FOR
ANTI-CLIMAX, PNA SEC GEN PROFESSOR GHAFOR AHMED ANNOUNCED

AUGUST 6 THAT THE PNA HAD "REACHED COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH CMLA ZIA ON THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES" REGARDING THE PNA'S POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN THE GENERAL'S CABINET GOVERNMENT. A FINAL DECISION, GHAFOR SAID, WOULD BE TAKEN IN A FURTHER MEETING WITH THE CMLA ON AUGUST 16. HAILED IN A PAKISTAN TIMES' HEADLINE AS A PNA "DECISION" TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT, GHAFOR'S STATEMENT IS IN FACT SLIGHTLY LESS THAN THAT, ALTHOUGH IT BRINGS THE PNA WITHIN HAIRBREADTH OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS.

3. THE LATEST ROUND OF PNA-ZIA TALKS WAS SPARKED BY AN INSPIRED STORY IN THE PAK TIMES JULY 30. PERHAPS REMAINED OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS TACTIC IN THE PAST (REF A), THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION (MLA) PUT THE PNA ON PUBLIC NOTICE:

--THAT PNA PRESIDENT MUFTI MAHMOOD HAD MADE "TOO MANY" STATEMENTS WHICH "ALMOST INDICTED" THE PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE (PML) FOR THAT PARTY'S DECISION TO JOIN THE FEDERAL CABINET. SUCH STATEMENTS, THE STORY COMMENTED, COULD WEAKEN THE PNA, AND WERE "DOUBLE EDGED SWORDS," AS PML WORKERS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO REACT "ARROGANTLY" AND "MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THE PNAZV

--THAT THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP), A COMPONENT PARTY OF THE PNA STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE ALLIANCE'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, SHOULD STOP ATTACKING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PML, AS SUCH ATTACKS ARE "DEVOID OF POLITICAL SENSE";

--THAT SINCE "A LARGE MEASURE OF AGREEMENT" WAS REACHED AT A JULY 26 MEETING BETWEEN THE CMLA AND THE PNA, THE PNA SHOULD "TAKE THE CHANCE" AND GET ON THE GOVERNMENT BADWAGON. BESIDES, THE ARTICLE HINTED, MINISTERSHIPS WERE ALREADY BEING DIVIDED UP, AND LATECOMERS MIGHT NOT HAVE THE PICK OF THE BUNCH.

4. THE PNA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MET AUGUST 3, AND IN RESPONSE GAVE MUFTI ITS "FULL AUTHORIZATION" FINALLY TO SETTLE THE ISSUE WITH ZIA. PROFESSOR GHAFOR TRIED TO SET A POSITIVE TONE FOR THE COMING ZIAMUFTI TALKS BY NOTING THAT THE PNA WAS "IN FAVOR OF JOINING THE GOVERNMENT." HE ALSO DROPPED THE PNA'S PUBLIC DEMAND FOR A SPECIFIC ELECTION DATE, SAYING ONLY THAT THE ALLIANCE WANTED THE GOVERNMENT TO BE "PURPOSEFUL AND POWERFUL."

5. ON AUGUST 4 AND 5 MUFTI ALTERNATELY MET WITH THE CMLA AND THE PNA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN RAWALPINDI, ALTHOUGH NDP PRESIDENT MAZARI WAS ABSENT FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING, APPARENTLY KEEPING HIS POLITICAL DISTANCE IN PESHAWAR.

ALTHOUGH MUFTI HAS BEEN GIVEN FULL POWERS TO NEGOTIATE
WITH ZIA, HE WAS FLANKED BY PNA VP NAWABZADA NASRULLAH KHAN
AND PML CHIEF PIR OF PAGARO AT A LAST NIGHT MEETING
WITH ZIA AUGUST 5.

6. PROFESSOR GHAFOOR'S AUGUST 6 STATEMENT, WHICH WAS
REPORTEDLY ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO HAVE BEEN MADE BY MUFTI
HIMSELF, NOTED THAT FOUR ISSUES WERE "SETTLED" DURING
THE PNA-ZIA MEETINGS:

- GENERAL ELECTIONS "MUST BE HELD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE";
- THE FEDERAL CABINET "MUST ENJOY FULL POWERS";
- PRACTICAL STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO INTRODUCE AND ENFORCE
ISLAMICIZATION";
- THERE "MUST BE A SOLUTION THE PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS."

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GHAFOOR ALSO SAID THAT AFTER THE "FINAL MEETING" AUGUST 16,
THE FEDERAL CABINET WILL BE RECONSTITUTED. GHAFOOR ADDED
THAT NDP PRESIDENT MAZARI HAS BEEN INVITED BY THE OTHER PNA
LEADERS TO ATTEND THE AUGUST 16 PARLEY WITH THE CMLA.

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7 COMMENT: ITS NOT OVER YET. THE BIG QUESTION LEFT OVER FROM THIS ROUND OF TALKS IS: WHY THE LONG DELAY TO AUGUST 16 BEFORE MAKING THE "FINAL DECISION?" THE HIATUS IS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO ALLOW BOTH SIDES TO REFORMULATE THEIR STANDS (AND PERHAPS CONVINCE THE RECALCITRANT AMONG THEM) ON THE FOUR MAJOR ISSUES THAT PRESUMABLY STILL KEEP THE PNA FROM CROSSING THE CABINET THRESHOLD:

--ALTHOUGH GHAFOR DROPPED THE PNA'S DEMAND FOR A SPECIFIC ELECTION DATE IN HIS AUGUST 3 AND AUGUST 6 STATEMENTS, AN ELECTION FORMULA HAS PERHAPS YET TO BE DEvised WHICH ALLOWS THE PNA TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT
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ALIENATING ITS FOLLOWERS, WHO SUPPORTED THE ALLIANCE LAST YEAR IN THE NAME OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. THE PNA, IF THEY JOINED THE CABINET WITHOUT A FACE-SAVING ELECTION FORMULA, MIGHT ALSO BE IN DANGER OF COMPLETELY SURRENDERING THE ROLE OF A DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION TO ASGHAR KHAN'S TEHRIK-I-ISTIQLAL OR THE NDP, IF IT QUILTS THE PNA OVER AN ALLIANCE DECISION TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT. THE CMLA, ON THE OTHER HAND, STILL APPARENTLY FEELS THAT SINCE THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS IS INCOMPLETE, AND THE POLITICAL MOOD IN THE COUNTRY STILL VOLATILE (THERE ARE STILL MANY BHUTTO SUPPORTERS, AND THEIR LEADER, ALTHOUGH INCARCERATED, IS ALIVE), HE CANNOT ANNOUNCE A SPECIFIC ELECTION DATE OR ALLOW THE RESUMPTION OF UNFETTERED POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

--THE PNA HAS ALSO REPORTEDLY DEMANDED THAT ALL OF THE BUREAUCRATS PRESENTLY IN THE CABINET (REF B) BE REMOVED, TO BE REPLACED BY PNA POLITICIANS. ZIA PRESUMABLY WOULD FIND IT HARD READILY TO ACCEDE FULLY TO THIS DEMAND -- HIS RELIANCE ON MEN LIKE GHULAM ISHAQ IS WELL KNOWN -- AND THIS ISSUE HAS BECOME A SERIOUS STICKING POINT.

--THE CMLA'S PROPOSAL FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS HAS ALSO BEEN RAISED IN THE PNA-ZIA MEETINGS. ZIA'S PROPOSALS HAVE DRAWN CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM (REF D), AND PNA PRESIDENT MUFTI MAHMOOD HAS SAID THAT WHILE THE PNA "UNDERSTANDS" THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL POLLS, THE ALLIANCE HAS "DIFFERENT PRIORITIES." THE CMLA'S RECENT OFFER OF A REFERENDUM ON LOCAL POLLS MIGHT BE THE SOURCE OR COMPRO-

MISE, BUT THE ISSUE REMAINS A DIFFICULT ONE.

--THE PNA MAY ALSO BE DIVIDED WITHIN ITSELF ON THE POSSIBLE ALLOCATION OF MINISTERSHIPS. NEVER AN EASY BODY IN WHICH
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TO MAKE DECISIONS, THE PARCELING OUT OF THE POSSIBLE SPOILS MAY HAVE BECOME AN IMPOSING INTERNAL STUMBLING BLOCK. (FEDERAL MINISTER ZAHID SARFRAZ TOLD EMBASSY FSL AUGUST 7 THAT THE PNA IS IN "CONFUSION" ON JUST THIS POINT.)

8. THROUGHOUT THIS LATEST STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS, THE PML, THE ONLY PARTY PRESENTLY OFFICIALLY REPRESENTED IN THE GOVERNMENT, HAS PLAYED A COMPLICATED ROLE. PML CHIEF PIR OF PAGARO HAS SAID THAT THE PML WILL STAY IN THE CABINET NO MATTER WHAT THE PNA DECIDES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ALTHOUGH HE REMAINS A PART OF THE PNA NEGOTIATING TEAM, THE PIR HAS PRIVATELY ADVISED ZIA TO CONTINUE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PNA, BUT TO KEEP THEM OUT OF GOVERNMENT AS THEY WOULD BE "TOO MUCH TROUBLE" -- A COURSE WHICH LEAVES THE PML THE ONLY POLITICAL PARTY IN THE CABINET, AND THE PIR AS ZIA'S POLITICAL BROKER.

9. THE PML IS NOT THE ONLY PNA COMPONENT WHICH FINDS ITSELF IN AN ANOMOLOUS POSITION. THE NDP, WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED THE PNA'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, MAY BE ON THE VERGE OF OPTING OUT OF THE PNA. NDP PRESIDENT MAZARI HAS PUBLICLY CALLED ON THE PML TO QUIT THE PNA, WITH THE OBVIOUS LOGICAL COROLLARY THAT, IF THE PNA OPTS IN, THE NDP WILL BE FORCED TO LEAVE THE ALLIANCE. THE NDP'S LATEST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SAYS IT WILL NOT JOIN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT WILL "SUPPORT THE PNA." IF THE PNA JOINS THE CABINET, HOWEVER, THAT POSITION WILL SOON BECOME UNTENABLE, AND THE NDP WILL PROBABLY CUT ITS TIES WITH THE ALLIANCE. MAZARI MAY BE PLAYING FOR TIME AT THE MOMENT (THIS IS A POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE DELAY UNTIL AUGUST 16), AS NDP LEADERS WALI AND NASIM WALI KHAN ARE SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM THEIR EXTENDED STAY IN ENGLAND ON OR ABOUT AUGUST 11, AND THE NDP WILL HOLD A CONVENTION AUGUST 14.

10. WITH THESE COMPLICATED CONSIDERATIONS, A PARTIAL NON-DECISION MAY BE THE BEST THAT A DIVIDED, AND ADRIFT, ALLIANCE COULD MANAGE. THE PNA REMAINS TEETERING ON THE BRINK.
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WHILE IT BALANCES BETWEEN ALTERNATIVES -- PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT OR NOMINAL OPPOSITION -- IT STAYS BARELY ALIVE

AS A POLITICAL FORCE. ONCE THE DECISION IS TAKEN, HOWEVER,
AND THE NDP LEAVES OVER A DECISION TO JOIN THE CABINET
OR THE PML QUILTS OVER A DECISION TO STAY OUT, THE PNA MAY
FINALLY AND IRREVOCABLY SPLIT. WITH SUCH PROSPECTS, PNA
PRESIDENT MUFTI PROBABLY WELCOMES THE ELEVEN DAY RESPITE
IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT.
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